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February 14, 2008

To: Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation & State Properties  
Representative Dean Kaufert, Chairman  
From: Trisha Pugal, President, CEO  
RE: AB 585 Change in School Start Date Law

On behalf of the over 1,000 hotels, motels, resorts, inns, condos, and bed & breakfasts throughout Wisconsin in our membership, we ask you to oppose AB 585 on the simple basis that this is not a necessary change.

The requirement that K-12 public schools begin no earlier than September 1<sup>st</sup> each year should continue because:

- Local school boards can still select the exact start date, and can still plan an end date in May while meeting state education requirements.
- Surveys covering phone, TV, and face-to-face mediums have universally shown public support of the start date, which includes parents of school-age children
- Nearby states such as the recent addition of Michigan plus Minnesota, and Iowa start after September 1 by law
- The law keeps K-12 students aligned with siblings in the UW System, which starts after September 1.
- High school students employed seasonally in the tourism industry can earn & save more for college by working throughout the prime summer season
- This law does not have a negative impact on the education of our children in this state

If families can enjoy our limited summer season in Wisconsin more fully, if students have an opportunity to earn & save more money, if there is no directly attributable negative impact on education, and if one of the state's primary industries is allowed to benefit by an extended season – contributing more sales tax revenue to the state – what could be a justifiable reason for the change?

Please oppose AB 585.

Cc: WIA Executive Committee  
Kathi Kilgore

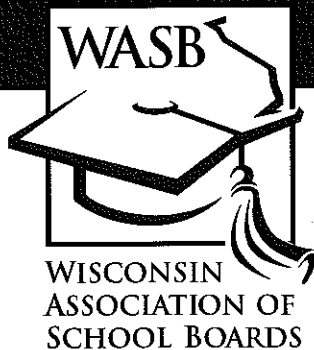
1025 S. Moorland Rd.  
Suite 200

Brookfield, WI 53005  
262/782-2851

Fax# 262/782-0550  
wia@execpc.com

<http://www.lodging-wi.com>





122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703  
PHONE: 608-257-2622 • FAX: 608-257-8386

JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Assembly Tourism, Recreation and State Properties Committee  
FROM: Sheri Krause, Legislative Services Coordinator  
DATE: February 14, 2008  
RE: Assembly Bill 585, relating to the commencement of fall classes in public schools

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) strongly supports Assembly Bill 585, which would eliminate the state mandate prohibiting public schools from beginning fall classes before Sept. 1. Locally elected school board members are in the best position to determine the calendar that fits their communities' needs.

The Sept. 1 school start date law has been in place since the 2002-03 school year. It is time to reconsider whether this law is in the best interest of the state as a whole. When the Sept. 1 school start date law was originally debated, proponents argued that any negative consequences for schools would be offset by increased time for families to vacation together and additional revenues generated for businesses and the state.

Economic impact data posted on the Wisconsin Department of Tourism Web site for traveler expenditures over the past 12 years raises the question of whether the Sept. 1 start date has, in fact, sufficiently contributed to the state's overall economy to justify the instructional disadvantages for students and school districts. Undoubtedly, numerous factors contribute to tourism revenues. Further review of the economic impact and employment data is warranted to determine whether a Sept. 1 school start date is justified.

In addition, families may have more time now to vacation in August, but the school terms are ending later. Most Wisconsin school districts began the 2007-08 school year on Sept. 4 and are scheduled to end between June 3 and June 12. However, many districts have had to cancel multiple school days this winter due to inclement weather. As a result, end dates are likely to be pushed back into the second and third weeks of June. With the Sept. 1 start date mandate having

been in effect for five years, it is now time to allow school boards, with input from their families and communities, to decide whether these start and end dates are appropriate.

As the end dates are extended, educators and administrators report that it becomes increasingly difficult to keep students focused on learning and maintain discipline. In addition, the later end dates have begun to conflict with other summer activities. Simply condensing the school year is often difficult as parents expect winter and spring breaks, and conferences and professional development opportunities must be accommodated. With expectations on public schools rising at all levels, local school officials should be given the maximum discretion possible to meet the increased demands.

The tourism industry is important to Wisconsin's economy as are the public schools. After five years, it is time to re-evaluate the state's Sept. 1 school start date mandate and allow local communities the ability to make the decisions that best serve their needs.

The WASB urges your support for AB 585. Thank you.

**Testimony on Assembly Bill 585**

**Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation and State Properties**

**Public Hearing**

**Thursday, February 14, 2008**

Good Morning, Chairman Kaufert and members.

My name is Steve Davis. I'm the co-owner of a restaurant in Oshkosh called Ardy & Ed's Drive-In -- a seasonal business that operates from March through September every year. Serving Oshkosh for 60 years, the restaurant is a summer tradition with local families. Ardy & Ed's is also a popular restaurant with the many families that visit Oshkosh each summer.

Ardy & Ed's Drive In provides as many as 30 jobs for high school students in Oshkosh. Those students use the money they make each year to help with their living costs, future tuition costs, and some even help support their families.

Working closely with many families in the community, I have seen the positive effect the September 1 school start date has had. Most families are so busy with sports activities in June and July, that they are left only with the month of August for family vacations. Having school start September 1 or later allows these families to have a full month to enjoy time together, traveling to tourist destinations around the state, or just enjoying the summer in their own community.

The change to a September school start date had a positive effect on my busy since the beginning. We now have a full month of summer business in August, where in the past things would slow by mid-month when parents and students began getting ready for their return to school. The increase of almost 25% in our August sales has allowed us to employ more high school students, as well as give them the opportunity for more hours of work. This has been a great plus for those students who must help pay for their own college educations.

Having worked to gain the support of our local teachers and school board when the school start date was originally changed, I still hear many comments by teachers about the positive effect the start date has had. Nearly every local teacher I have spoken with has mentioned their satisfaction with the current plan. They also appreciate the time they have to spend with their families in August.

Mr. Chairman and members, I encourage you not to support Assembly Bill 585, a measure that would remove the uniform school start date in Wisconsin. The September 1 start date has been a positive change for Wisconsin families, Wisconsin business, my employees and their families, as well as my business.

Sincerely,

Steve Davis  
Ardy & Ed's Drive In  
2413 South Main Street  
Oshkosh, WI 54902

February 14, 2008

Representative Dean Kaufert, Chair  
Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation and State Properties  
P.O. Box 8952  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Chairman Kaufert and members,

In response to possibly changing the school start date to before September 1st, we ask that you consider the impact on tourism. We are an independent family owned Resort in Crivitz - Shaffer Park Resort, Motels and Supper Club. Next year will be our 70th Anniversary.

Each year, our business spends more weeks in the RED due to the increasing taxes -- federal, state, local and employee related. This is not mentioning the increasing cost of goods and services including insurance and utilities to only mention a few. We are barely able to keep in the green for the end of year bottom line.

We give over 30 employees a stable job in the tight off season and over 50 in the peak summer months. We are contributing to the local economy as a Resort with lodging and food and also as a stable employer. With a looming recession we ask that you PLEASE, DO NOT CUT BACK ON OUR SHORT TOURISM SEASON.

We rely upon the summer months of June, July and August to support our business year around. The last 2 weeks of August is equivalent to at least 6 weeks in the slow off season. We need these last 2 weeks of August to continue to operate and cover our losses in the slow winter months. With out this income, we may be forced to close in the off season and only operate seasonally. This will have a direct impact on the local economy with 30 employees without a job in the cold winter months.

We ask you again, please do not cut back on the already short tourism season. For those of us making a go of it up here in the North, we cannot survive without it.

Sincerely,

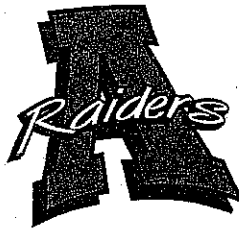
Amy Shaffer  
Shaffer Park Resort, Motels and Supper Club  
N7204 Shaffer Road  
Crivitz WI 54114  
715-854-2356

Testimony in Favor of Eliminating the September 1 School Start Date  
District Administrator – Susan H. Alexander, Markesan District Schools  
February 13, 2008

The September 1 start date mandate is an unreasonable extension of the state into the operations of a local school district and should be eliminated for these reasons:

1. Local communities know their needs best. State mandates should be carefully considered and legislated only when the local community cannot provide for itself. This legislation interferes with the community's ability to best serve the particular needs of its students and their families.
2. Wisconsin students are not permitted the extra one to two weeks of instructional time to prepare for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and other norm-referenced tests such as NAEP, ACT and SAT. States that allow their local districts to establish start dates can accommodate these student needs.
3. Student co-curricular activities begin mid-August. This makes it difficult to encourage students to participate in these activities and it is nearly impossible to teach students what the behavioral expectations are at spectator events.
4. Students participating in the high school band enjoy performing at fall football games. There are usually two games before the band meets for initial instruction. No band instructor supports the concept of performance before instruction.
5. School calendars extend into the second and third weeks of June which limits the summer school programming that is available to teachers wishing to pursue summer studies.
6. The annual FFA convention in Madison usually falls during the second week in June. Due to the September 1 start date, school calendars are built into the second week of June which means that some schools cannot participate in these events as students are reviewing and taking finals.
7. School boards would like to build several break days into their calendars particularly in the stretch from January through March. This is not possible with the September 1 start date as it would extend the school year further into the second or third week in June.
8. School calendars cannot be built to accommodate varying religious needs of the community. Instead, students belonging to minority faiths must be absent from instruction in order to participate in their faith commitments.
9. Students expect to return to their studies in mid to late August. But students find it difficult to attend to their studies by the second week in June. The calendar should be developed to support the student's best interests and times of focus.

The State of Wisconsin should eliminate the September 1 school start date and permit local communities to develop their school calendars around their own needs.



*"Making The Best Better!"*

## **School District of Arcadia**

**LAWRENCE W. FERGUSON**

High School Principal  
756 Raider Drive  
Arcadia, WI 54612  
(608) 323-3334  
FAX: (608) 323-2256

**JON TURNELL**

Superintendent  
756 Raider Drive  
Arcadia, WI 54612  
(608) 323-3315  
FAX: (608) 323-2256

**RICHARD HANSON**

Elementary Principal  
358 E. River St.  
Arcadia, WI 54612  
(608) 323-7500  
FAX: (608) 323-7015

### **Board Members**

Loren Wolfe, President  
Jerry Sorenson, Vice President  
Laney Bork, Clerk  
Cletus Foegen, Treasurer  
Clarence Pronschinske  
Michael Edmunds  
Henry Schultz

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this morning.

The Arcadia School District is located about 45 minutes north of La Crosse in the coulees and valleys of West Central Wisconsin. The major employers in the area include Ashley Furniture and Gold'n Plump Chicken. The majority of the District is rural, supporting an agricultural way of life that has been going on for generations.

I come before you to support AB585, giving local school districts the opportunity to set their own school start date. Since the law became effective in 2000, our District has requested and received a waiver to start school prior to September 1. The waiver has been approved due to the fact that our district, the public school, is required to provide transportation for the two non-public schools in our District. One of these schools is located in the City of Arcadia, and the other is located 15 miles from Arcadia in the Town of Waumandee. This extraordinary circumstance would add additional transportation costs in the range of \$10-13,000 for our District if we didn't start school at the same time as requested by the non-public schools. While our focus is to eliminate these unnecessary costs, there are other reasons why we support this bill.

As I mentioned before, our District supports a large agricultural economy. As such, students are needed on the farm more in the spring of the year than they are in August. From an educational standpoint, we have greater attention and learning taking place in August than we do in June when students anticipate their summer break.

We currently have students starting in August to coordinate start times of distance learning classes with the local colleges and technical colleges.

Students are back at school prior to September 1 to participate in athletics. Athletic contests need to be scheduled in August to coordinate with the state finals schedule.

These reasons may, and most likely are, applicable to many districts around the state. What sets the Arcadia School District apart is an annual community event called Broiler/Dairy Days. This event, held over Memorial Day weekend, is a celebration of the agricultural way of life so many participate in, and it signals the start of summer. Since Memorial Day weekend creates a four-day week, many people coordinate vacations at this time and on an annual basis.

One size doesn't fit all in this situation, just like many others related to the operation of a school district. Our values are different, the jobs are different, tourism isn't as crucial, and while you should visit the area, we don't charge admission for the thrill you'll find in the beauty of the countryside.

We are a collaborative group of dedicated people passionate about the education our children receive. We embrace local control and implore you to put this bill up for a vote so you can hear it from others as well on their desire to operate in a manner suited to their school district. The people in my district are confident that they know what's best for their children and by you giving them the opportunity to begin school prior to September 1, it will signal to them that you agree our district residents are competent to do what's best for us.

To suggest anything different doesn't reflect our character or commitment in providing the best educational opportunity in our district and to have this issue heard by all legislators, since I know there are other districts wanting the same consideration.

I thank you for your time.



February 14, 2008

Caroline Wieman  
9304 Oakwood Drive  
Whitewater, Wisconsin 53190

Dear Chairman Kaufert:

I am writing in support of AB 585 relating to the commencement of fall classes in public schools (i.e., start date) which would eliminate the prohibition against beginning fall classes before September 1. The bill would go into effect for the 2008-2009 school year.

I have taught in the public schools of Wisconsin for more than 30 years. Most of those years, the school year usually began at some point in the third week of August. Most students were ready to be back in school and happy to be with their friends. Not so much of a reason when I taught (retired in 2000), but certainly now in Whitewater, our children who receive reduced and free breakfast and hot lunch will receive better nutrition for that time in August. (I do realize they will not receive the meals in June, however.) Perhaps the Whitewater Unified School District provides breakfast during summer school or if it doesn't, perhaps it should. (I will check on this.)

Although it can be hot in August, because our bodies are more used to hot weather having had all summer to adjust, the weather seems to be less of a negative to learning than it does in mid-May to mid June when we are so thankful for warm, sunny days. I have observed this both as a high school teacher and an elementary volunteer working with second graders two afternoons per week for the last two and one half school years.

In 2002, I was elected to the Whitewater Unified School District School Board and so was involved in negotiating the calendar for several school years. Because of the late start and the number of holiday breaks, the teachers' union annual convention, as well as staff development time, first semester is quite fragmented. Previously before the September 1 beginning, semester exams could be completed at the high school by the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday; now they come after, and second semester begins late in January. This makes the scheduling of conferences much more difficult to coordinate for elementary, middle and high schools. High school teachers have only had some of their students for one month, not really enough time to get to understand the learning styles of their second semester students when the end of February conferences begin. If second semester began sooner, the end of February conferences would come at six weeks, a time when a teacher is better able to make more complete assessments of his/her students' progress.


Why the end of February conferences? Another teacher union meeting comes the last Friday in February, and our district tries to schedule conferences before that time in order to have the least number of fragmented weeks as possible.

Equalizing the days from first to second semester is very difficult with the September 1 start. Now because of snow make-up days, second semester is sometimes five or six days longer than first. If a teacher has the same students all year this is not a problem, but many high school courses are offered as semester courses only. With an August start this would not be as big a problem.

I firmly believe that it is in the best interest of the public school students of Wisconsin that the beginning date of the school year be returned to local school boards and boards of education. Those elected officials are very focused on the needs of their students and are working with teachers, administrators, staff and parents to increase the opportunities for their students to maximize their achievement every year. Allowing individual districts to set their own school calendars would, I believe, contribute to increased student achievement. The state retains the authority to set the number of minutes students must be in school during any given school year, so returning the calendar to local districts will not result in any lessening of the time students spend in a learning environment.

I hope you will share this letter with the other members of your committee, and I am very hopeful that this bill will pass and go into effect for the 2008-2009 school year. Allowing individual school districts to determine their own calendars does not prohibit any school district from beginning school September 1 or later.

Sincerely,

  
Caroline Wieman

Good Morning,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of AB 585, the "School Start Date" bill. It has the support of all of the school superintendents in my district, and I believe in many other areas of the state as well. Here are the reasons I have introduced this legislation:

-Under current law the State of Wisconsin mandates that school districts cannot commence classes before September 1<sup>st</sup>, unless they obtain a waiver from the state. There is no rational reason why the State should reserve this right. This is a local control issue and can be best decided by local school boards, the members of which are elected by and are directly answerable to parents of students in the districts.

-The bill was passed as an item in the 1999 state budget. That means that some legislators voted in favor of a budget bill even though they did not favor this measure, and probably some voted in favor of the budget without even realizing that this provision was in it. This is not a good way for government to conduct business. Important policy items such as this should pass or fail on their own merit.

-There are practical as well as academic reasons why local school boards should decide when to start school for the fall term. In some school districts as many as 40% of the students are already back on campus for athletic practice. An even more compelling reason relates to the administration of national placement tests, which are set by the College Board. The sooner a district begins classes, the greater the advantage for the students.

-Because of the later start date in Wisconsin, many districts must hold commencement in the middle of June, or even later.

One of the arguments in favor of current law is that the weather is warmer at the end of August than in early June. In Wisconsin there is very little difference in average temperature in the first week of June and the last week of August. There also is very little difference in the frequency of rain during these times.

In reality, most districts would probably decide to commence fall classes no earlier than the last Monday in August rather than the Tuesday after Labor Day, a difference of about one week. Remember that this bill would not REQUIRE school districts to start earlier, it would simply give them the right to decide. Some districts would likely decide to remain the same.

Again thank you for hearing my testimony today. Please carefully consider voting in favor of AB 585 and returning the right to set the start date to the local school boards where it belongs.

Jim Ott  
Representative, 23<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District

To: Dr. Robert Slotterback

From: Susan Lueders

Date: February 13, 2008

RE: Proposed change in law regarding school starting dates

Changing the state law that requires public school districts to begin school on or before September 1 is a positive change for the following reasons:

### **Educational Reasons:**

High school students are at a disadvantage in this state on the College Board Advanced Placement exams. Many districts (especially in southern states) end their school year in early May, when A.P. exams are nationally administered. These students have up to four extra weeks of instruction if their districts begin in mid-August. Of course, no one is suggesting that Wisconsin schools begin in mid-August, but if schools would begin even one week earlier, Wisconsin students would benefit from this additional instructional time.

Students would have more days to prepare for the WKCE tests. Because so much is at stake with provisions in the No Child Left Behind law, extra instructional time would be a benefit. Changing this law might keep a school from achieving failing status as determined by this law.

Students taking ACT and SAT tests will also have more instructional time allotted before taking these tests.

Elementary teachers have experienced the difficulty in teaching younger children when the school year ends and the weather warms in June. Students are less likely to be negatively affected by warm weather when they are excited about the start of the new school year. Warm August and September weather apparently is not as challenging as teaching during warm June days.

Students opting for an early graduation from high school with the intent of starting college in January, have longer overlapping high school and college schedules with the current state law.

### **Political Reasons:**

This state law runs counter to the Wisconsin tradition of home rule. Local districts should have the discretion to decide what is educationally the most appropriate starting date for their district. If a local district is adamant that the tourism industry is of vital importance to their economy, and are willing to place this reason above other rationales, then let those districts choose a later start time. Some areas of Wisconsin do probably benefit from this arrangement. To mandate this across the state for the sake of a minority is not good public policy, however. Most of Wisconsin's population is not living in a tourism-rich area. It benefits those non-tourism areas to start earlier for the above identified educational reasons.

Where is the evidence that later start dates has actually produced its intended results for Wisconsin tourism? If other states begin the school year earlier, are tourists flooding the state immediately up to Labor Day weekend? Has this law noticeably increased tourism?

X { At the least, allow Milwaukee Public Schools to begin earlier by passing a law that allows all first class cities in Wisconsin to be free from a state-imposed starting date. Conduct a study to compare the results on standardized tests to see if the extra school days in August and September cause an upswing in test scores.

# MEQUON-THIENSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT - 2006-2007

○ = Vacation/Holiday    □ = Staff Development Day    △ = Early Release Day    ( ) = End of Quarter

## August

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

#Days: Students - 0 Teachers - 2

## September

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

#Days: Students - 19 Teachers - 20

## October

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

#Days: Students - 19 Teachers - 21

## November

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	(10)	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21*	22*	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

#Days: Students - 20 Teachers - 20

(46 DAYS)

## December

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

#Days: Students - 16 Teachers - 16

## January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	(25)	26	27
28	29	30	31			

#Days: Students - 20 Teachers - 21

(45 DAYS)

## February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

#Days: Students - 20 Teachers - 20

## March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	(30)	31

#Days: Students - 21 Teachers - 21

(44 DAYS)

## April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

#Days: Students - 15 Teachers - 15

## May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

#Days: Students - 22 Teachers - 22

## June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	(13)	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

#Days: Students - 9 Teachers - 10

(46 DAYS)

September 5: School Begins

October 2: Yom Kippur

October 26, 27: No School K-12 - Teacher Convention

\*November 21, 22: (Gr. K-8) No School - Parent-Teacher Conferences

(Gr. 9-12) ½ Day on 11/21, No School on 11/22

December 25-29 & January 1: No School K-12 (School Resumes January 2)

January 15: Martin Luther King Day

April 6-13: No School K-12 (School Resumes April 16)

June 13: Last Day of School

REV - 4/2006

	Student Days	Teacher Days
August	0	2
September	19	20
October	19	21
November	20	20
December	16	16
January	20	21
February	20	20
March	21	21
April	15	15
May	22	22
June	9	10
	181	188
Thanksgiving & Memorial Day		2
<b>Total Teacher Days</b>		<b>190</b>

4  
19  
20  
20  
20  
21  
15  
22  
9  
(181)

# 2007-2008 School Calendars

## Start/End Dates

School District	Start Date	End Date
Rhineland	Sept. 4, 2007	June 3, 2008
Eau Claire	Sept. 4, 2007	June 5, 2008
Appleton	Sept. 4, 2007	June 6, 2008
Green Bay	Sept. 4, 2007	June 6, 2008
Kenosha	Sept. 4, 2007	June 6, 2008
La Crosse	Sept. 4, 2007	June 6, 2008
Wausau	Sept. 4, 2007	June 6, 2008
Wisconsin Dells	Sept. 4, 2007	June 6, 2008
Pewaukee	Sept. 4, 2007	June 10, 2008
Kettle Moraine	Sept. 4, 2007	June 11, 2008
Waukesha	Sept. 4, 2007	June 11, 2008
Milwaukee Public	Sept. 4, 2007	June 12, 2008
Superior	Sept. 4, 2007	June 12, 2008
Wauwatosa	Sept. 4, 2007	June 12, 2008
Madison	Sept. 4, 2007	June 13, 2008
Minneapolis	Sept. 4, 2007	June 11, 2008
St. Paul	Sept. 4, 2007	June 11, 2008
Chicago Public	Sept. 4, 2007	June 12, 2008

Tuesday

Friday